

CARLYLE SHREEVE SMITH (1915-1993): OBITUARY

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The rich and productive career of Carlyle S. Smith, a well-known historical archaeologist, prehistorian of the Great Plains region, and archaeologist of the East Pacific, has now ended. His death occurred December 13, 1993, following by-pass surgery. This was within only a few months of his most recent publication on Easter Island research (Smith 1993) and his enthusiastic participation in the 3rd International Conference on Easter Island Research: Rapa Nui Rendezvous '93. These quite recent accomplishments in spite of his failing health, stand as testimony to Smith's enduring interest in and dedication to Easter Island investigations.

Interestingly (and perhaps surprisingly to some) fewer than 20% of Smith's publications dealt with Easter Island and East Pacific. Clearly his primary research foci were elsewhere, and he produced many significant publications on archaeological explorations in the Central and North Central Great Plains (mostly Kansas, Nebraska and South Dakota) and on historic EuroAmerican trade items (especially firearms, gunflints and ammunition). Easter Island research (and related East Polynesian archaeology), even though less of a research focus for Carlyle Smith was nevertheless of great professional and personal interest to him. Any of his former anthropology students from University of Kansas can attest to this. He projected into his lectures and many discussions on Easter Island the excitement he felt for the island, and expressed well the importance of the insights gained there, to the broader questions in archaeology. Like his close friend and colleague William T. Mulloy (also a Plains archaeologist and firearms expert) Smith was a broad based scholar and a true intellectual in the best sense of the word.

Carlyle Shreeve Smith was born March 8, 1915, in Great Neck, New York to Harold William and Lulu (Allen) Smith, both middle class New Englanders, who were small-town oriented. His father was an electrician at the time of Carlyle's birth and later became Postmaster in Great Neck, and was also Chief of the local volunteer fire department. Carlyle was the only child of two parents who were also only children.

Smith completed his undergraduate work at Columbia College in 1938 and was influenced by the archaeologist William Duncan Strong and Ralph Linton, the renowned ethnologist. Graduate studies were interrupted by World War II and Smith first worked in a defense plant on Long Island, and later was assigned to the US Army Air Forces as an instructor (maps and aerial photography). During the war years (1942) Carlyle Smith married Judith Pogany. They later had

two children, Evan Shreeve and Pamela Anne.

After his discharge from the military in 1946 Smith returned to Columbia University. Before completing his Ph.D. (1949) he accepted a position at University of Kansas (1947). It was half-time as a museum curator and half-time as an instructor (he was the only anthropology professor in the Sociology Department). His dissertation topic was on "The Archaeology of Coastal New York."

In 1955, while digging an earth lodge village site near Ft. Thompson, South Dakota, Smith received an invitation from Thor Heyerdahl, the already famous adventurer, to accompany him as one of the archaeologists on the Norwegian Archaeological Expedition to Easter Island and the East Pacific. He accepted, obtained a leave of absence from Kansas and departed before the end of the year.

The international team (Heyerdahl, Mulloy, Smith, plus Edwin Ferdon, Arne Skjølsvold and Gonzalo Figueroa) upon their arrival on Easter Island in October, explored the island intensively, conducted small scale excavations and then divided up the duties with regard to investigation responsibilities and reports. Mulloy focused on Vinapu, Ferdon on Orongo and Skjølsvold favored the quarries at Rano Raraku. Young Figueroa divided his time among the various projects. Smith chose a diversified approach involving the excavations of a wide variety of habitation sites ranging from caves to open village sites (see Smith 1993:79). He also surveyed several *ahu*, and as the only one who had ever excavated fortification ditches, volunteered to test Poike Ditch (see Smith 1961a and 1990). Smith is also the one who made the mould of the large statue which still stands in Oslo today at the Kon-Tiki Museum.

The first volume of the *Reports of the Norwegian Archaeological Expedition to Easter Island and the East Pacific* (Heyerdahl and Ferdon 1961) contained 18 archaeological reports on various important sites from around the island. Smith authored six of these himself plus an introduction (co-authored with Heyerdahl) on the itinerary and organization of the expedition. The most often cited of these appear to be three: one that deals with chronology (Smith 1961b), one on radiocarbon dates (Smith 1961c) and the well-known paper on Poike Ditch (Smith 1961a). Volume 2 of the expedition reports (Heyerdahl and Ferdon 1965) deals with site work on other islands and contains several technical reports on such things as obsidian analysis, skeletal analysis and serology investigations. Of the 10 site reports (Marquesas, Ra'ivavae, Pitcairn and Rapa

Iti); five are on sites from Rapa Iti; Two of these were written by Smith (1965a, 1965b).

Within a year after publication of Volume 1 of the expedition reports, Smith also published a significant journal article (Smith 1962) treating Easter Island chronology (with the blessings of all other team members). Most of Carlyle Smith's other publications relating to Easter Island and East Polynesia are reviews of books (Smith 1971, 1980, 1983). He also prepared Bill Mulloy's obituary for the Society for American Archaeology (Smith 1978). His Marquesas work stems from a five month trip to East Polynesia in 1963, accompanied by his wife Judith and their two children (ages 8 and 12 at the time). They lived on Hiva Oa in the Marquesas not far from the site of Paul Gauguin's grave.

Smith viewed the Easter Island expedition trip of 1955-56 as a turning point in his career. It launched him into a career direction that could not be stopped. With people's curiosity about Easter Island by the 1960s, increased travel to the island, and (as any of us who



Carlyle Smith at Vai A Heva, Poike

knew Carlyle Smith can testify) his own great facility for effective communication and a charismatic charm, he was destined to become the chief liaison person among the scientists to communicate between the archaeologists and the general public. He returned to Easter Island 13 times between 1967 and 1978 in the capacity of lecturer, guide and consultant to the tourists (generally for Lindblad Travel, but twice for the Norwegian American Line). His experiences clearly enhanced his lectures at University of Kansas as well. In Fall 1959 as a K.U. Freshman in Carlyle Smith's Introduction of Anthropology class, I vividly remember to this day his riveting lectures on Polynesia and his amazing slides of far off Easter Island and Pitcairn. The life of that small town boy from western Kansas was changed forever--

touched irreversibly by the images created by Carlyle S. Smith.

Regarding Smith's scientific contributions to Easter Island research, perhaps the most important are three: 1) his evidence that Poike Ditch was man made and not a natural geological feature, 2) his demonstration that the obsidian weapon, the *mata'a*, appeared temporally quite late, and 3) that types of masonry in the *ahu* might be useful chronological markers.

Carlyle S. Smith is survived by his widow, Judith, and by their two children Evan and Pamela, as well as three grandsons. Not so surprisingly, Carlyle and Judith produced two intellectually oriented children. Their son Evan has a Ph.D. in linguistics from Indiana University and is now in Columbia Missouri as a correspondence study program coordinator. Pamela earned a B.A. at University of Kansas in English literature and has continued in creative writing, but is currently more devoted to raising her two sons David and Andrew. Carlyle and Judith's other grandson is Evan's son Nathan.

Carlyle retired from teaching on December 31, 1980. I hope I have been able to demonstrate here, however, that he never retired from research and writing, nor from his desire to continue meaningful dialogue with his colleagues interested in Easter Island and the East Pacific. In 1990, at the annual meeting of the Society for Historical Archaeology in Tucson, Arizona, Carlyle Smith received the J.C. Harrington Medal in Historical Archaeology (1989).

With the passing of Carlyle Shreeve Smith we have lost a true scholar of the "old school", a person well educated in all sub-disciplines of anthropology. Smith had an intellectual breadth and scope very hard to find now in this modern age of specialization. He also bridged an interesting span of time in anthropology from an age of scientific exploration to an era of scientific data processing. Even though fully capable of understanding and appreciating both, he clearly "took his stand" with the earlier age of scientific exploration. This coupled with his personal qualities of charm and intellectual breadth made him an exceedingly interesting man able to inspire students, scholars and tourists alike.

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Carlyle Smith poses with a pukao at Vinapu

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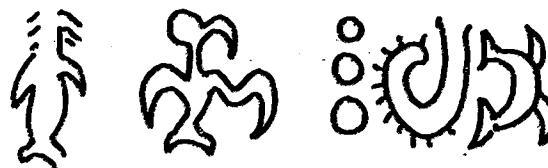
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